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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001643

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/NEA
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS PEACE CORPS HQ
STATE ALSO PLEASE PASS EU COLLECTIVE
LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHAUSER AND DAS JZARATE
TREASURY ALSO FOR OFAC/RNEWCOMB AND TASK FORCE ON TERRORIST
FINANCING
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN
NSC FOR DORMANDY
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA ALVERSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST MURDER JOURNALIST AND THREATEN OTHERS

MAOISTS ASSASSINATE JOURNALIST-CUM HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

1. The Maoists announced on August 16 that they had killed journalist-cum-human rights activist, Dekendra Raj Thapa for allegedly spying for the security forces against the insurgents. Thapa was abducted on June 26 in the mid-western district of Dailekh. He was a reporter of the state-owned Radio Nepal and also an advisor to the Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES), a local NGO. The Maoists have killed six journalists during the nine-year-old insurgency. Following the assassination of Thapa, the Maoists have issued death threats against nine other journalists, including two journalists associated with The Kathmandu Post. According to the news coordinator of The Kathmandu Post, all nine journalists are from Dailekh District. Maoists have accused them of helping the security forces and writing against Maoist activities.

JOURNALIST THAPA'S MURDER CONDEMNED

2. The killing of Thapa by the Maoists has drawn nationwide condemnation. Ten organizations, including the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) and human rights organizations, have denounced and condemned the rebels for murdering Thapa. A joint press release issued by these organizations on August 17 stated- "it has become more clear with the killing of journalist Thapa, a creative and professional journalist committed to his vocation, that the Maoists are involved in irrational, inhuman and terrorist activities to the level of physically finishing off any side advocating an independent press, protection of human rights and speaking the people's voice." The FNJ and the human rights organizations have also sought the Maoists' immediate commitment to guarantee freedom of the press and fundamental human rights.

MAOIST BAN ON JOURNALISTS

3. The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) reportedly has banned journalists from entering rural areas, saying they are not registered with the Maoists' administration. One of the FNJ members based in Nepalgunj, a main town in mid-western region of Nepal, quoted a Maoist leader as saying that journalists not registered with the local Maoists administration were prohibited from reporting from those areas.

Comment

4. The recent killing of a journalist and human rights activist clearly signals that the Maoists are bent upon silencing those who speak against their atrocities. The assassination will obviously undermine the attempt by the central leaders of the Maoists to present their party as a political force fighting for the cause of common Nepalese.